

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE INITIATIVE

Initial Public Workshop

July 23, 2014 | 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

National Capital Planning Commission

COMPILED PUBLIC COMMENTS

**SUBMITTED AT INITIAL PUBLIC WORKSHOP
AND VIA THE PROJECT'S ONLINE
PUBLIC COMMENT PORTAL**

Last updated July 28, 2014

Staff did their best to transcribe all handwritten comments.
Originals are available upon request at the offices of the
National Capital Planning Commission.

**Wednesday, July 23, 2014 | Initial Public Workshop
NCPC**

Compiled Comment Cards

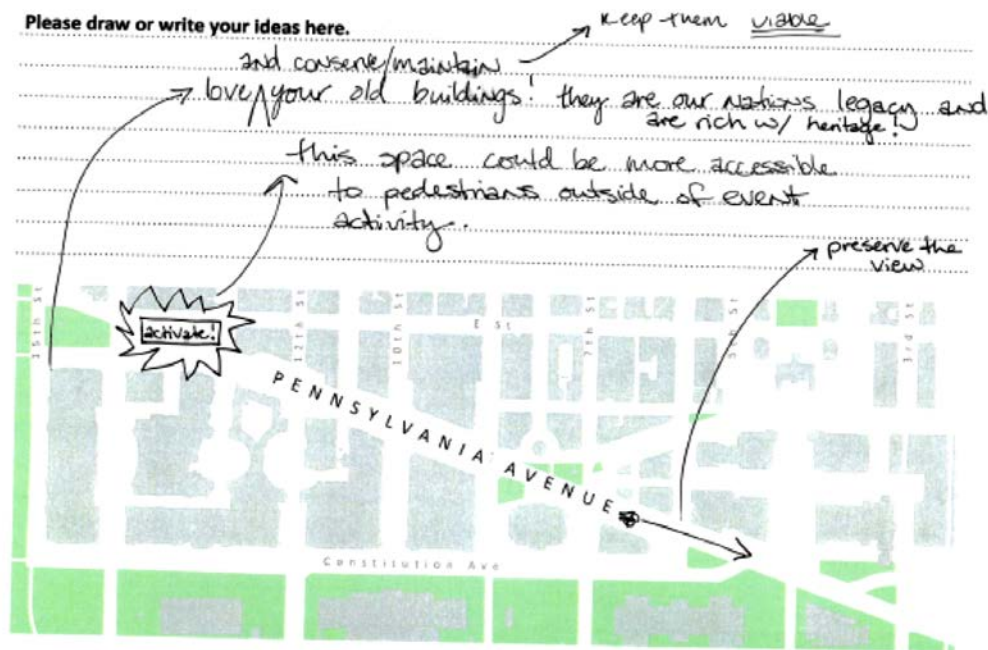
Name: Anonymous

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

What people need:

- tourists: wayfinding
beverage/snack opportunities
interpretive information; history/architecture/context
shade! - seating to rest and plan the rest of their visit
activities/events
- locals: 24/7/365 attractions; is housing out of the \$ question?
entertainment
amenities: everyday shopping; small grocers; restaurants
respite from the crowds/safety
- workers: quick path to the office
oasis (outdoor, quiet, lush, visually stimulating - art!)
collaborative space; co-working; etc.

Please draw or write your ideas here.



Name: Joe Seymour

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

Similar to the temporary lighting of Washington Monument, why not encourage temporary artistic lighting display/themes? That would draw in evening foot traffic outside of 9-5 business hours. Also create a draw for the space between the Capitol and White House.

Name: Anonymous

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

Issues w/ flooding on the Avenue.

Name: Anonymous

Please draw or write your ideas here.

Penn Ave and the PADC goals seem to be at odds with the other great streets/malls/ave displayed. None of those are neighborhoods or retails. Penn Ave is too grand for small street ideas.

Character, Iconic, Grand, Elements -

Character needs to be improved, that's all.
P.S. Moving bike lanes to side would help.

Name: Anonymous

Please draw or write your ideas here.

- Reduce motor vehicle lanes on Pennsylvania. It is too wide to cross.
 - Redevelop freedom plaza with greenery + art
 - Mixed-use development for 24 hour uses.
 - Tell the history of the street, the city, the country. Walk of fame style.
 - Convince me why Pennsylvania Ave is important. I'm not sure it is a top 5 DC street.
-

Name: Anonymous

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

-My favorite, most memorable great streets are tree-lined, with large shaded sidewalks, and other areas of the street that are ambiguous, and used by all (bikes, peds, and cars). The auto-travel lanes are only a fraction of the street section.

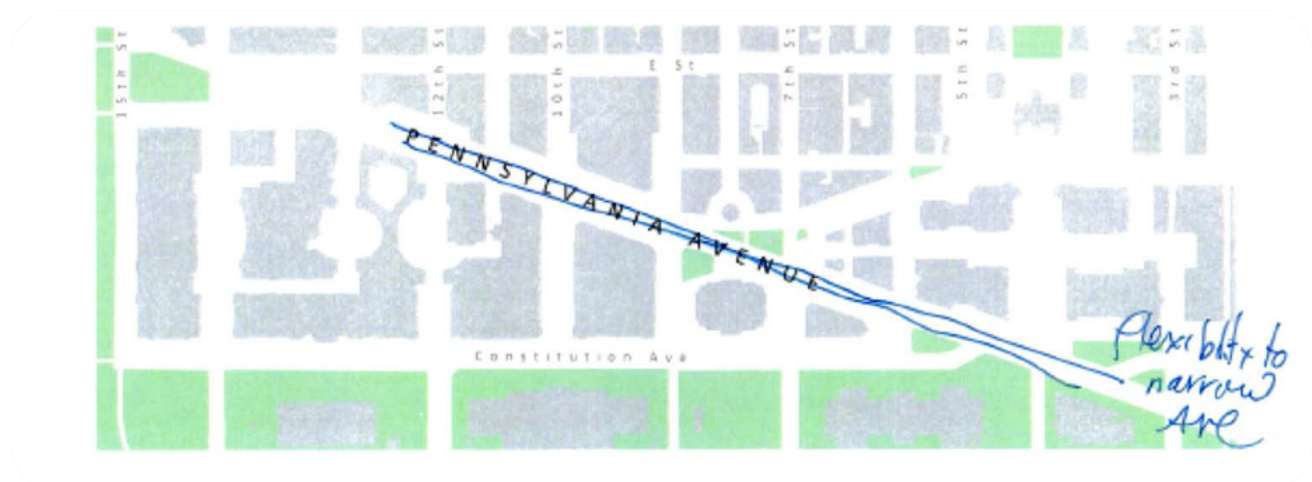
-LOVE the double alley of trees on Penn Ave now by FBI building on 13th St. (?)
Making room for landscape, trees, and other street furnishings are essential to making Penn Ave livable and vibrant!

Name: Anonymous

Please draw or write your ideas here.

*Especially since PA Ave closed

PA Ave is a very wide Avenue. This may be an opportunity to study how to give the Avenue a "diet" that is flexible to have the ability to host events both national and local but also can shrink narrow the Avenue so that it is not as much of a separator from the north and south.



Name: Robert Hershey

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House should be reopened. I have testified on this before NCPC several times and the Washington Post has published my Op-eds. Because of the

strong White House structure and the large distance to the street, the occupants are protected from any potential problems. I analyzed dynamic loading of structures in my doctoral dissertation in engineering. The White House is safe.

Name: Lee Waldron

Share your BIG and little ideas for Pennsylvania Avenue

Address street lighting sustainability, maintenance issues by investigating purchase and installation of:

1) State of the art light sources*

*that continue to provide high color rendering/optimum color temperature/high efficacy/long life

*that could/should be LED-type 50K-100K Hours which can be easy re-installed into the fixtures

2) Digitally addressable lights to:

-provide operational feedback

-address lighting intensity at time of day

-centralized control for the entire avenue

-load shedding

-end of life

A) High Mast Fixture (Broadway light)

B) Decorative Washington Globe (at curb edge)

C) Pedestrian up/down light (lighting the sidewalk and uplighting the leaf canopy)

D) Building floodlights on the Justice Department facade provide a pleasant space at night

Open House Stations

At the initial public workshop, participants provided input on five stations designed to gain feedback on various aspects of the Avenue's past and future. Invited attendees, using sticky notes, attached their comments on the poster boards at the following stations:

- User Experience
- The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation
- Lessons Learned from Capital City Streets
- Crafting an Aspiration Statement
- Big and Little Ideas for the Avenue

Station: User Experience

What draws you to the Avenue today?

- The view
- Biking (commuting)
- Metro station
- Penn Ave = opportunity to take the innovations DC is making as a city and showcase them on a national level. Green/complete streets, public open space as the streetscape, diverse, pedestrian-friendly, dynamic, alive, fun, and bike-friendly? Multimodal transportation networks.
- Connection from NW to Capitol Hill
- Parades street fairs
- Tell a better story - use story telling as a method to drive visitor movement
- Bike views/left right
- Usually passing through
- Federal offices, official events, and cafes + farmer's market at lunch
- Getting from one DC attraction to another
- National Gallery of Art + National Archives
- National Archives
- Fogo de Chao
- Views!
- Save FBI and give it over to museums

- Large events, historical tours w/ friends/family in town
- Landscape/views. Connections to other parts of the city.

What discourages you from coming to the Avenue more often?

- Clean up the parks/monuments (trash, waste, etc...) more recycling + lights
- Vehicular traffic. No there there!
- Drivers don't obey traffic signals or pedestrian crossings – drive through the crosswalk. Needs to be safer for pedestrians.
- It's not the best street in D.C., not the best place. Other streets are better.
- Stairways not working
- Poor lighting, lack of shade trees for pedestrians, lack of storefront retail
- High speed/high volume vehicle traffic. Lack of easy access to commercial spaces.
- Sterile office-y
- Lighting
- Lack of evening activities
- No destinations Ten Penh closed
- Not enough small spaces of interest
- Façade of buildings should be complementary (?)
- Street festivals, etc., need recycling
- More activity needed in evenings/weekends, but with greater notification of street closures for events.
- Separate pedestrian from bikes
- Lack of accessibility or attractions for (non tourism or govt jobs) local residents, particularly to the north. Needs more diversification of commercial tenants and more attractive N-S pedestrian thoroughfares.
- Lack of activity, feels unpleasant walking or biking
- Lack of a variety of public spaces of different scales
- Easy fix: don't fence off outdoor dining space (feels exclusive). Relax regs.
- I was here for this (World Cup Event at Freedom Plaza photo): hot! More trees + shape would be nice.
- Not accessible – would like to see it more casual and accessible
- Would like more outdoor activities

- Would like to see more people
- Would like pilot program to fix landscape and cosmetic

What is your favorite place or feature along the Avenue?

- Freedom Plaza
- Museum
- Beautiful street furnishings
- Landmarks
- Navy Memorial
- Bike lanes (though they need more space + physical separation from traffic). Freedom Plaza.
- Robert Hershey: I have lived in Washington since 1968. Pennsylvania Avenue was a lot better before it was closed in front of the White House. [Provided three news articles]
 - Hershey, Robert L. (2002, July 7). Reopen America's Main Street. *The Washington Post*, p. B8.
 - Hershey, Robert L. (2003, March 9). Reopen America's Street. *The Washington Post*, p. B8.
 - Hershey, Robert L. (2011, August 28). Don't wall off the Ellipse. *The Washington Post*, p. C5.

Station: The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation

Comments on the PADCO Objectives

- Collection of spaces that are programmed at the Avenue
- Maintain grandeur as link between White House and Capitol
- Additional greening. Greater focus on sustainability.
- Keep programming at the right scale for the avenue – without disrupting pedestrian and bike traffic.
- As a bridge between city and nation, ensure more activity on weekends/evenings
- Reduce barriers (economic + bureaucratic) for activities/events – especially smaller scale/lower budget
- Create safer environment for pedestrians
- #5 Make it a neighborhood. By focusing on diversification of residential and commercial tenants.
- Encourage cultural/art installations, park-like settings, and monument sites.

- Preserve people access rather than security. Open PA Ave in front of White House roadway traffic.
- Better connection between the PA Ave and White House Penn Ave
- Affordable housing
- Create a more vibrant streetscape with ground level retail
- Maintenance and management is key
- #3 PADC Objective – excellent opportunity to create a bridge between the nation and the city. South side is nation north side is city.
- Activate federal triangle building in same way.
- Move #8 and #12 to top of list. Density?
- #3 More affordable for real people.
- #8-#11 Where are they?
- #1 Symbolic
- #5 Make a neighborhood!
- Note on jurisdictional boundaries map: Display more context – PA Ave past the White House

Station: Lessons Learned from Capital City Streets

What characteristics of these streets could help inspire the future character and role of Pennsylvania Avenue?

- Increased use after office hours
- More attractive architecture
- Programming for the street
- Human scale features alongside grand features
- More small spaces-such as sidewalk art, cafes, performance spaces-scheduled throughout year and along whole Avenue.
- Undulating street/façade wall (creation of ‘pocket park’ areas), well developed street floor (patterned pavement), green-scape, centers of activity (sculpture/fountains/monuments, performance spaces/buskers)
- Pedestrian friendly promenades. Multi-modal: pedestrians/bikers/streetcars/cars
- Needs to be seen as a local as well as a national street. Design the street to be a little “messy” to juxtapose w/ contained architecture
- Grand streetscape emphasizing National role

- Emphasize linear PA and openings along it.
- Limited cut through. Can the north/south traffic be minimized?
- A good street requires good urbanism: density, mixed uses, retail, etc. Main streets > monumental places.
- Embrace the future – Penn Ave as the first Great Street in DC!
- More local pedestrians rather than tourist domination
- Greater use of civic space
- Emphasize foot and non-car traffic during peak tourism/entertainment hours. “Shrink” the road at times?
- More diversification of tenants
- More trees and natural landscaping
- Unique paving like Avenida de Liberdade, Lisbon
- Pedestrian space in the middle
- I’m from Beijing. So the most memorable character of Penn Ave is that is not totally Capital (like in Manhattan) or policy driven (like in Beijing). Phenomenon on Penn Ave should be more diverse and react more to the neighboring programs.
- More restaurants, cafes, and retail
- Greater focus on parks and sustainability. Greater focus on pedestrians.
- Mix of ceremonial, civic, and commercial uses.

What characteristics should be avoided?

- Don’t get carried away with security fears. Reopen Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House.
- Don’t think so linearly think corridor with many nodes and sections
- Infuse private sector (designers) in the visioning plan.
- Over trafficked/thoroughfare, extremely sparse areas, inaccessibility, too much vehicular traffic, too little activity/traffic (should not be pedestrian only)
- Man examples shown are more like parks + open spaces than streets (such as New Dehli, Brasilia, London). PA Ave is a street.
- Too much auto focused traffic + accommodation
- Transit-friendly but not pedestrian-friendly (i.e., Brasilia)
- Too much monumentalism. We already have the mall to fill that role.
- Less car centric

- Need tram or BRT (attractive)
- More space for people, less space for cars.

Station: Crafting an Aspiration Statement

Describe the overall experience of the Avenue in 2040

- Welcoming
- Grand
- Iconic
- Walkable
- Dynamic
- Well-maintained
- Culturally infused
- Pedestrian Friendly
- Patriotic
- Inspiration
- Citizenship
- The American Spirit
- Democracy
- Diplomacy
- Our role in the global community
- Accessible
- Breathtakingly beautiful
- Make Penn Avenue a model for the 21st century complete street! Show the world how it's done! (another person agrees)
- The relationship between the Mall and the Avenue: the Mall is 'quiet,' a place where people play and visit. The Avenue is more spontaneous, it is where 'work' happens.
- Public gathering space, but different than the Mall's 'front yard'
- An iconic image of Main Street USA, with people, interactivity, heritage
- A place for people to visit and celebrate.
- Attention to detail - maintained and thoughtfully designed

- The city's one great public space (more oriented and used by city-dwellers rather than visitors)
- Active, public, promenade. Vibrant connector.
- Many people contrasted their sense of the Avenue today with what they wanted for the future.
- Right now, it's hard to know where you are when you are on the Avenue – not great wayfinding. Penn Avenue should serve as the horizontal guidepost to the city, in the same way that the Washington monument is the vertical guidepost.
- A better sense that people live in the area – seeing people taking an evening stroll.
- Businesses and dining during the days, celebrations on the weekends.
- Pennsylvania Avenue should be one whole street from Georgetown to the Capitol, like it was in the 1990s. Reopen Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House.
- Today, I walk through it, not along it. I want it to feel more pedestrian friendly, with more green space, and more shade.
- Festive. I want to see more “real people” (residents) and markets.
- Today, it is inaccessible. It has stairs to nowhere and doors that don't open. I can't get to the places that I want to go.
- Now, a ghost town at night. I want it to be active, vibrant.
- Awe-inspiring (there are some elements now, like the view of the Capitol, Old Post Office).
- Ceremonial – but it should be planned flexibly, not for one event every four years.
- Monumental (this can be both good and bad)
- So much history and potential, but...
- Anxious for my safety as a bicyclist and pedestrian
- Right now, it feels office-y
- The bike path makes it feel more active, useful

Station: Big and Little Ideas for the Avenue

- Name: Robert Hershey, Past President, D.C. Society of Professional Engineers
Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House should be reopened. I have testified on this several times before NCPC and the Washington Post has published my op-eds. Because of the strong White House structure and the large distance to the street, the occupants are protected from any potential problems. I analyzed dynamic loading of

structures in my doctoral dissertation in engineering. The White House is safe. Reopen the street.

- Reduce traffic speed and improve safety for everyone. Less through traffic.
- Open street programming
- A really big idea: raise the height limits. Build more city!
- Commemorate the original Chinatown at PA Ave & 3rd (architecture, signage, paving)
- Document/restore/revise original mixed architectural feel of the north side of the Avenue – contract with Monumental south side – FBI site is opportunity. See original plan for Market Square
- Well defined street floor (patterns)
- Undulating Street (façade wall)
- Pocket parks
- Sculptures
- Monuments
- Performance Space
- Tax incentives for sustainability or cosmetic improvements
- Art in the setbacks
- Residential and office will need to be managed carefully to coexist
- Sustainable features
- Street cars
- Multi-modal (fewer cars, more bike, more pedestrians)
- Celebrate U.S. and international/global community
- Smart streets for better management of landscape/public realm
- Too many festivals that close the street to everyone.
- Freedom Plaza - Rebuilt to original design
- Freedom Plaza – Design Competition we want to see children here
- Biggest failure = Federal Triangle. Edge will always be dead. Need to activate spaces thru Federal Triangle to get people thru to Mall.
- Federal Triangle – Wayfinding needed. Where is the mall?
- FBI Building – Mixed-use
- FBI Building – SAVE
- FBI Building (face of building along Pennsylvania Avenue) – Improve the median

- Redevelop FBI site. Add small-scale internal streets to pedestrianize the site, as city center has done. Mixed-use, dense.
- Design multiple nodes with different characters. Don't think only linearly (group support!)
- Correct Union Station to Penn Ave.
- Continue cycle track up Louisiana to Union Station.
- Great opportunity for temporary art. Maybe each state has an artist design a place down the middle of the street?
- Park between Pennsylvania/Constitution: Museum or Memorial. Commemorate historic Chinatown.
- Improve access (public transportation) along Penn Ave.
- Improve the traffic signals. Can't cross in the amount of time you're crossing.
- Playground somewhere!
- Marshall park: Needs activation and renovation
- Marshall park: Better integrate/open up park to the Avenue
- Reduce number of car lanes
- Transit options for tourists throughout Penn Ave
- Bikes lanes on outside of street now down middle
- Light up the Federal Triangle buildings at night to make them look dignified. Too dark at night.
- Buildings east and west of Old Post Office: Needs to be activated. Retail on ground floor.
- Underground parking. Look at Heidelberg, Germany
- Indiana Ave/7th Street: Will need ordinances/rules for compatibility of residential/office/retail.

ONLINE COMMENT PORTAL
Comments received through Monday, July 28, 2014

Name: James Nobil *(Received 7/18/14)*

One issue for close consideration is other solutions to government occupant building security requirements other than maintaining huge sidewalk setbacks from the street. These enormous mostly empty sidewalks are creating an unfriendly, uncomfortable feeling atmosphere for pedestrians.

Name: Robert Hershey *(Received 7/20/14)*

Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House should be reopened. I have testified on this before NCPC several times and the Washington Post published my op-ed "Reopen America's Street" on March 9, 2003. I am a Past President of the District of Columbia Society of Professional Engineers. My doctoral dissertation was on dynamic loading of structures, which applies to blast, wind, and sonic boom impacts. In protecting occupants of the White House from a potential car bomb attack, there is no need to close Pennsylvania Avenue. The strong building structure and the large distance to the street provide sufficient protection, from an engineering standpoint.

Name: Kevin Belanger *(Received 7/21/14)*

I love the bike lanes on Pennsylvania Avenue. Every effort should be made to make them safer by eliminating the possibility of drivers doing U-turns across the bike lanes. I thought the zebra bumps were a legitimate solution to the problem that didn't negatively affect the aesthetics of the street. But aesthetics shouldn't be the only factor being considered on the street, even if it is our "main street".

Name: Gillian Burgess *(Received 7/22/14)*

Thanks for working on this great area. My two suggestions are:

- 1) There's no place for kids, especially toddlers, in the Pennsylvania Avenue streetscape. It would be heartwarming to see some sort of park area where kids could run around.
- 2) The cycle track creates conflict between pedestrians and cyclists at intersections. The roads are too wide, and pedestrians are often "stranded" in the middle. There are no signs or pavement markings indicating where stranded pedestrians should stand, creating a dangerous situation, as pedestrians stand in or unexpectedly wander into the cycle track.

Thanks again for your work.

Name: Jack Waterman *(Received 7/23/14)*

Start filling old offices with residential! We need more housing in the city, and the added people will bring the change to Pennsylvania Avenue that the Initiative intends to promote.